

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 192023Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8074

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 3099

EXDIS

FOR: ASST SECRETARY ROGERS AND AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHLAUDEMAN

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VE

SUBJ: TIMING OF ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHLAUDEMAN

REF: CARACAS 1338 AND 1200

BEGIN SUMMARY: IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHLAUDEMAN SHOULD NOT PROCEED TO CARACAS UNTIL SHORTLY AFTER THE VISIT HERE OF THE SECRETARY, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND MAY BE SCHEDULED FOR MID-APRIL. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR AGREEMENT WITH ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS, THERE FOLLOWS OUR JUDGMENT AS TO THE TIMING OF THE ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SHLAUDEMAN. WE BELIEVE HE SHOULD NOT ARRIVE HERE UNTIL AFTER THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. WE BASE THIS JUDGMENT ON THE VIRTUAL CERTAINTY THAT DEMONSTRATIONS, PARTICULARLY BY STUDENT GROUPS, WILL TAKE PLACE AGAINST THE NEW AMBASSADOR ON HIS ARRIVAL AND AFTERWARDS. PRESIDENT PEREZ TOLD ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS ON MARCH 15 THAT WHILE HE PERSONALLY WELCOMES AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMAN TO VENEZUELA, AS SOMEONE WHO HAS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, OPPOSITION TO HIS APPOINTMENT IS BEING EXPLOITED BY ANTI-US ELEMENTS HERE, AND "THIS CONSTITUTES A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR THE U.S. AND ALSO FOR VENEZUELA."

2. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE
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SHLAUDEMAN APPOINTMENT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED HERE (REFTELS).

GOV SECURITY SERVICES ADVISE US THAT DEMONSTRATIONS WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE WHEN HE ARRIVES AND WILL BE PROLONGED FOR SOME TIME THEREAFTER. WE BELIEVE THAT THE VENEZUELAN SECURITY FORCES WILL BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THESE DEMONSTRATIONS, BUT IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT THEY COULD LEAD TO VIOLENCE PRODUCING INJURY TO SOME PARTICIPANTS.

3. THIS BEING THE OUTLOOK, WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BE UNWISE FOR THE NEW AMBASSADOR TO PRECEDE THE SECRETARY TO CARACAS. WE FULLY RECOGNIZE THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING AN AMBASSADOR IN PLACE BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. AT THE SAME TIME, WITH PERHAPS LESS THAN FOUR WEEKS REMAINING BEFORE THE SECRETARY VISITS VENEZUELA, ASSUMING HE COMES HERE IN MID-APRIL, SHOULD THE NEW AMBASSADOR PROCEED BEFORE THE SECRETARY, THE FORMER'S ARRIVAL WOULD TEND TO COINCIDE WITH THAT OF THE SECRETARY. THIS WOULD ENTAIL A SERIOUS RISK THAT ANTI-SHLAUDEMAN DEMONSTRATIONS, COMMENCING ON HIS ARRIVAL AND BEING PROLONGED AFTERWARDS, WOULD IMPINGE UPON THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. THIS, WE FEAR, WOULD IN A VARIETY OF WAYS COMPLICATE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AND DETRACT FROM ITS SUCCESS.

4. AS FOR THE SECRETARY'S OWN VISIT TO VENEZUELA, WE BELIEVE THAT A DEFINITE POTENTIAL EXISTS FOR SOME HOSTILE REACTION FROM THE EXTREME LEFT, BUT THAT THE GOV SINCERELY WELCOMES THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AND CAN AND WILL CONTROL THE SITUATION EASILY. WE EXPECT THAT THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WILL NOT ONLY SERVE TO INTENSIFY OUR DIALOGUE WITH VENEZUELA, BUT WILL GENERATE MUCH GOOD WILL FOR THE U.S. IF AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMAN WERE TO ARRIVE SOON AFTER THE SECRETARY HAS DEPARTED, WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOOD FEELING GENERATED BY THE SECRETARY'S PRESENCE HERE WILL QUITE LIKELY REDUCE THE INTENSITY OF PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE NEW AMBASSADOR. MANY OF THE EMBASSY'S SOURCES ALSO BELIEVE THAT ANTI-SHLAUDEMAN ACTIVITY HAS A SYMBOLIC AND CONTRIVED AIR. THE THOUGHT HAS BEEN EXPRESSED THAT ANY OTHER DESIGNEE WOULD HAVE BEEN IN THE SAME POSITION AND THAT THE AGITATORS HAVE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THE DIFFICULTY

IN DEMONSTRATING AGAINST THE SECRETARY BECAUSE OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT'S INTEREST IN THE VISIT AND BECAUSE OF THE SECRETARY'S INTERNATIONAL STATURE. IT IS LIKELY THAT AFTER THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, THE PRESSURE TO SEEK A SCAPEGOAT FOR OBJECTIONS TO U.S. POLICY WILL
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NO LONGER BE SO INTENSE. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMAN PROCEED TO CARACAS SHORTLY AFTER THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO VENEZUELA.

5. THE EMBASSY WILL UPDATE ITS ASSESSMENT AS THE LOCAL SITUATION EVOLVES.
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